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HISTORY OF JOHN BARR,

CONTAINING


SOME PARTICULARS

RELATIVE

TO THE EARLY PART OF HIS LIFE.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF,
AND LEFT AS A LEGACY TO HIS GRAND-CHILDREN.

“We speak that we do know, and testify that we have
seen.”

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SOME REMARKS

RELATIVE TO

MR. BARR'S LIFE AND CHARACTER.

Mr. JOHN BARR, the subject and writer of the following "Narrative," resided in Rowan county, North Carolina, about fifteen miles west of the town of Salisbury. As his whole life, from the age of fifteen to eighty-two, was passed in the same neighbourhood, his person, circumstances, and character, are well known to the inhabitants, who are therefore competent witnesses either to confirm or disprove what is here stated.

His occupation was that of a farmer. The tilling of his own ground with his own hands, yielded him more than a mere competency for himself and family—in connection with contentment and almost uninterrupted health.

It may be inferred from the account which he gives of his early life, that Mr. Barr en-

joyed very limited opportunities of education. But he possessed what is much more certain in its results—a love of knowledge that shrank from no difficulties in its pursuit. So that his attainments in almost every department of intellectual cultivation within reach of the English scholar, were far superior to what is common with men whose “hands minister unto their necessities and to them that are with them.” Geography, History, and Chronology, Ancient and Modern; Natural, Moral and Mental Philosophy, in addition to subjects connected with Theology, were his daily studies, each receiving in turn his undivided attention. The structure of his mind was masculine, and his memory uncommonly retentive; he therefore pursued these paths of science with a success truly remarkable. I well remember after graduating, to have passed a day with him to my utter amazement. The acquaintance he manifested with almost every department of science to which my attention had been called, notwithstanding the difficulties under which he must have laboured in their investigation, was surpassed

only by the simplicity of his mind, which seemed not to allow him even to suppose that his attainments were beyond those common to men of his manner of life.

It may be asked, how a farmer could obtain time for such studies. I can only answer, that during a long and laborious life, he always gained time to lay up something new. The true secret of which was, he paid

——“no moment but in purchase of its worth.”

The passing events of both the religious and political world received from him their tribute of attention. The cause of missions and Sabbath-schools particularly lay near his heart. To the former he contributed, by diffusing information, by his money and his prayers; while in addition to these, the Sabbath-school had his instructions as a regular teacher, until a short time before his decease.

In the various departments of his reading, he kept pace with the world; so that his lamentation was not, “that the former days were better than these,” but that while so much was being accomplished, he had it in his power to do no more in aiding the cause of universal reformation.

The narrative supersedes the necessity of any remarks upon the writer's religious experience. Of the character of his piety, some conception may be formed from the structure of his mind and his studies. His religion, as it manifested itself in actual life, was remarkably uniform: he was "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"—and moreover he knew that his labour was not in vain in the Lord. His manner was grave, his piety intelligent and cheerful; he was the profitable companion of the aged, and an acceptable member in the circle of the young.

Early in life he was ordained a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church of Thyatira, Rowan county, and after the organization of that of Back Creek, near to his residence, with which Church he connected himself, he there held the same office until the close of life. To his worth as a member of Church judicatories, they whom he often met in council, can bear testimony.

Mr. Barr died November 10th, 1831, aged eighty-two years, in the exercise of his rea-

son, and supported by the Christian's hope. In the burying-ground of Thyatira Church his body lies, with those of his family who have gone before him.

To the publication of these brief notices, and the following Narrative, it may be objected, that *they contain nothing remarkable*. In answer to which, it may be said,

1. Mr. Barr was a man extensively known and as universally beloved. His friends and acquaintances would be pleased to possess that in which they can "see him as he was," and "by which, he being dead, yet speaketh."

2. That these pages present nothing "remarkable," I humbly conceive is no objection to their being given to the public. *Strange* things interest us all, but are by no means so instructive, as that "great cloud of witnesses" to the goodness and care of God, which we have in the common events and blessings of life. The religious experience of such a man as Mr. Barr, will, in a great degree, answer to that of every true Christian. And because he was a man in common life, others of like

standing may with more profit view the way by which he was led.

3. Much of our Biography is on one of two extremes—Mr. Barr occupies a middle ground, where, by far the larger part of the inhabitants of our Christian country are found. He was neither rich nor poor—neither learned, in the common acceptation of the term, nor illiterate—was neither high in office, nor too low to be observed—neither a presumptuous transgressor at any time, nor one sanctified from his birth.

4. In him the power and worth of religion are seen, as it brings under condemnation one, who, in the view of men, as “touching the righteousness in the law, was blameless;” and enables him in his old age thus to close his Narrative :

—“Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day, hoping and trusting that the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, will still continue to cleanse, and at last present me without spot before his Father’s throne, when I shall see his face and sing his praise—world without end. Amen.” S.

Doylestown, Pa. January 17, 1833.

ADDRESS TO HIS GRAND-CHILDREN.

MY DEAR CHILDREN :

My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved.

What advantages or disadvantages the age you are now entering on may offer for that purpose, is to me altogether unknown. If you should be so happy as never to hear the doctrine of salvation by grace, or the operations of the Holy Spirit on the human heart, doubted by some, and denied and derided by others; you may, in this respect at least, be said to live in a better age than your grandfather did. To give my feeble testimony to the truth of these doctrines, is what is principally intended in the following narrative. Subordinate to this, is a desire to leave a pledge of my respect and affection for you, that when I am silent in the dust, you may have these lines to serve as a memorandum, to remind you that you had a grand-father who cared for you while living, and who, "being

dead, yet speaketh." You may also profit by my mistakes and errors, which are every where to be seen : and if you find any thing worthy of imitation, copy after it, not as the example of a weak, fallible creature ; but as you find it authorized and approbated by the oracles of truth.

Let me hope that none of you will defer religion as long as I did, and upon the same mistaken and presumptuous grounds. The sooner you get it the better. In a word, let it be your first, your chief concern, to become religious. With this you will be rich, though you have nothing else. "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." I know not how to conclude this address better than in the words of inspiration by Moses and the Apostle Paul*—to which I will add my Amen.—"The Lord bless you and keep you—the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." "Now the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen, and Amen."

J. B.

* Num. 6.—Heb. 13.

THE HISTORY OF JOHN BARR,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born in the lower part of Pennsylvania in the fall of the year 1749, of Irish parents.

The spring following my father moved up to York county, Little Connewago, where he lived till 1765, when he came to Rowan county, North Carolina, October 5th, and died the year following, October 31st, at the age of 57 years, leaving four daughters and five sons. My father's name was William. He was of a middle stature, plain in his manners, mild in his deportment, and exemplary in his life. His talents were moderate, and seemed to excel in no one except in strength of memory. My youngest sister was married to John McCorkle, January 27th, 1774.

On the 4th of April, 1776, I was joined in marriage to Mary King, daughter of Richard King, by whom I had ten children.

But it is now time to take a retrospect of the former part of my life. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." Thus far I could imitate the great Apostle: but when I became a man, I found it not so easy with him to "put away childish things." At the age of sixty-five years, it will not be expected that any thing more than a sketch can be given, and that a very imperfect one; but it may be depended on, so far as it goes, to be correct.

Being born of religious parents, their care and attention was exercised in endeavouring to bring me up in the nurture and fear of God. I seemed naturally to have an attachment to books, and was fond of learning to read, and was not without some very early serious impressions, whether they could be called religious or not. I was told that heaven was a pretty place and that good people went there. I wondered that every body did not be good.

I think, about the age of three or four, my father bought me a new book with a sky-blue cover, which recommended it to me very much—I thought heaven was all like the cover of my book.

I recollect about this time to have asked my mother what people should do to get to heaven? She told me if I wanted to go to heaven, I must be a good boy—must say my prayers—read my book—not fight, or tell lies, &c. These conditions I thought I could very easily comply with; but thought it was not enough to pray twice a day; and asked her why people did not keep praying always? She told me people could not live without eating, and must work to get something to eat. I saw the force of this, and made no reply; yet still I thought with myself, that if people would do nothing but pray till they should die of hunger, it would be very likely to secure heaven to them. I thought that if praying twice a day would make me good, praying seven times a day would make me better. This was more than mere speculation; I actually tried to put it in practice;

so early and deeply rooted did the legal spirit appear. I soon, however, began to relax a little ; and it was not long till I thought twice a day was too much trouble. And I know not whether I should not have laid it aside altogether, had it not been for some alarming dreams I had about this time. I frequently dreamed that the day of judgment was come, and it always found me unprepared. One dream in particular I will here insert at length, which made an impression on my mind that I could not easily shake off.

I thought myself on a vast extended plain, where I could see in every direction as far as the eye could reach. And looking up to the sky, I thought it parted and fell off to each side—when, to my no small astonishment, a light which darkened the sun appeared in the opening a little south of where I stood. I did not hesitate a moment about the cause of this light. I had no doubt that it was Christ coming to judgment. I saw the appearance of one like the Son of Man clothed in light, attended with thousands and tens of thousands of shining forms which I supposed to be

angels, descending as if to the spot where I stood ; but stopped in the region of the clouds, and did not come quite to the ground. I saw a throne erected, and heard the loud trumpet sound, “ arise ye dead and come to judgment.” I cast my eyes around and saw the earth teeming with its former inhabitants, the dead rising in every direction. Some had got on their feet—others appeared in a sitting position—whilst only the heads of some were to be seen above ground. But this I observed, that all faces were turned towards where I was, and every one, so soon as disengaged from his clay, moved with hasty steps towards the centre where I stood, till a countless multitude filled the plain. I should have been very glad to have been only a spectator of this scene ; but found I must have a share, and act a part in it. The order of process I do not so well recollect, as what followed it—which, I suppose I shall never forget, so long as I am capable of remembering any thing. A separation took place in this vast assembly—one part seemed to mount as on eagles’ wings towards heaven. I followed them with

a wishful eye till out of sight, but remained still with those left upon the ground. It was not long however till the multitude on the ground was put in motion by legions of frightful beings which I had no doubt were devils; and I among the rest descended a long declivity, at the end of which, as I expected, we came in sight of hell's gate. It was not without great reluctance that I proceeded—and though I felt no external force pushing me forward, yet I was somehow impelled to move on in a way that I could not resist. I at last came to the gate, and set my foot upon the threshold—the gate was wide and had been crowded for some time—I being near the last was not jostled by any person—I took my stand on the threshold, laying fast hold of one of the side-posts, and looked in. It was a most dismal place, beyond all description or conception I had formed of it—some parts had the blackness of darkness—in others, objects could be seen in a dim twilight. I observed that it was much easier to get in than to get out again: the way to it being down hill, the door but little raised,

and then a perpendicular pitch down, more than the length of a man's body. I thought with myself that if I would once go in, I would never get out again ; and resolved that I would not go in if I could do otherwise. O ! how precious did time appear to me then. I thought if I had but one day, how I would improve it ! how I would pray, and strive, and live ! The thoughts of going into hell were greatly aggravated too, by the hopes I had formerly entertained of getting into the joys of heaven. I did not know, however, but a prayer might be heard from the very gates of hell, and resolved that if I could do nothing else, I would pray even before I went into it. I had learned the Lord's prayer, which was all that I made use of at that time ; and began to say it over as well as I could ; but my fears of every moment dropping into hell awoke me, when I found myself about half through, speaking with an audible, broken accent, weeping at the same time : some of the family awoke me, and asked what ailed me ? I answered that I had only been dreaming.

I begin with my dream, which appears to me a little extraordinary on two accounts.

1. The order and regularity of it, which is not common to me in dreaming. However regular my thoughts might *appear* to be in sleep, I had but few dreams that would stand the sober investigation and reflection of waking hours ; but, generally speaking, were too full of inconsistencies and incoherences to be classed among the cogitations of a rational creature.

2. I could hardly persuade myself otherwise than that some things in it were beyond my acquired knowledge at that time. I recollect sometime after to have read a description of the general judgment, which placed the seat of it in the air ; and was struck with the likeness that appeared between the description in that particular and my dream ; but cannot recollect to have had any other idea before, than that it should be upon the earth.

But here perhaps I may incur the charge of enthusiasm, in seeming to indicate that I had a new revelation in sleep. I do not

admit the charge, for two reasons: *First*, I am not certain that I had not the idea before; my not being able to recollect it is not sufficient evidence to my own mind that no such idea existed there; but of this I am certain, that if I had the idea, it had made very little impression on my mind. *Secondly*, on the supposition that I had not the idea before, it was not what I would call a new revelation; but what was before plainly revealed. In 1 Thessalonians, iv. 17, Paul mentions at least the saints meeting the Lord in the air, whether He will descend with them to the new earth (as some think,) or not. So that taken either way, that I had, or had not the idea before, I can see nothing but what is in perfect unison with the promise of the Comforter, (John xiv. 26,) who was to teach things before unnoticed or unknown, and bring to remembrance things that were known before. I know it may be said, that "although in the early ages God was pleased to communicate instruction by dreams, visions, &c., as Elihu observes, (Job xxxiii. 14—16,) in this age of the world, it seems rather superstitious to ex-

pect communications in sleep, when we have now a more sure word of prophecy."

I must confess that I am no great advocate for dreams, and that any communications that are now made, when the canon of Scripture is completed, must be in conformity with the written Word; but if a revealed truth that had been but little known, or scarcely noticed before, is in a dream more deeply impressed on the mind, I should be unwilling to reject it; because I believe that there may be a good as well as an evil agency in our minds in sleep; and that we may now in the night season be instructed, as well as those in David's time. For this we have the authority of the Apostle Peter, in his quotation of, and comment on the prophet Joel—(Acts ii. 17,) and that dreams should be occasioned by, or a consequence of, pouring out of the Spirit.

I shall now dismiss this particular, by observing, with an eminent English writer,* "That the phenomenon of dreaming is inexplicable at least, if not absolutely impossible, without taking in the agency and intervention of spiritual beings to us invisible."

* Baxter on the *Vis inertiae* in Newton, vol. 1st.

About the age of five or six, I was much entertained with a little book written, I think, by James Janeway, on the piety and happy deaths of children, from the age I then was and upward. If I recollect right, the title was, "Janeway's Token for Children." I remember once of taking it out to the field—(I think I had some small charge assigned to me of keeping cattle from the corn, which required but little attention,) and sitting down on a log, and reading till my eyes so overflowed with tears, that I could not see to read any more. I knelt down and prayed. I had by this time learned some forms of prayer out of my mother's catechism; but this was the first time I recollect to have ventured to make use of my own words, or what is called extemporary prayer. Thus I spent perhaps some hours; reading and praying alternately. I thought it would be a very desirable event to die and go to heaven. I could not content myself with being a common Christian; I wanted to be eminent for piety and religion. But these thoughts having spent their force, I returned again to my former state of coldness and carelessness.

At eight years of age, I attended preaching frequently ; and although it was not much calculated to alarm sinners, yet I went home sometimes very uneasy. When the works of a true believer were described, I found I could not apply them. I was however fruitful in expedients, to prevent myself from being, as I thought, too much disturbed. Yet I found that I had enough to do to persuade myself that all was well with me.

The first expedient that occurred to me was, "that I was as good as my neighbours, and if it fared ill with me, it would fare ill with a great many." This satisfied me for a while, till at last, I thought if it should fare ill with others, it would be but a poor consolation for me, that I had gone to hell for the sake of company ! In another expedient, I thought I was more correct and more rational. I knew that it was the preacher's business to try to make the people good, and that people were more disposed to stop, short of the line of rectitude, than to reach or go over it. I thought then that it was a piece of wise policy in a preacher, when drawing

the character of a man, to go a little over the mark in order to bring the people up to it: or perhaps draw the character of a man far advanced in religion, which the young beginner was by no means yet able to imitate. In this dexterous way of reasoning, and in which I was no doubt assisted by an invisible agency, I got the clamors of an awakened conscience laid asleep again.

With respect to my external conduct, it was in the main irreproachable; but I had a vain and empty mind, excessively fond of hearing my own praise; and perhaps from no higher motive, was urged on to what was deemed laudable. At the age of eleven, I suppose I could have answered, without hesitation, every question in the larger and shorter Catechisms. About this time, Mr. Thompson, our minister, came round in a course of family visitation—and observing me to be forward in answering questions, he asked my father how old I was? On being informed, he said I ought to be put to the Latin school. My father said nothing about my want of capacity to learn; but expressed

some doubt of his circumstances being adequate to such an undertaking. This was food for my vanity. I began to think I was almost half a preacher already—and was vain and foolish enough to learn little scraps of Latin out of old authors, when they were put into English, such as “*Onamvis est sis in tuto, noli esse securas*”—Though you be safe, be not secure. But after all, my splendid talents amounted to little more than an ease or facility in committing any thing to memory, and a power of retaining it, when some of my brothers were greatly superior in depth, strength, and solidity of judgment.

CHAPTER II.

When I was about fifteen, my father sold his land in order to move : which he did the year following. Having then little to do on the farm, I had much leisure : some of it I spent in going to school, and on vacant days would sometimes join a fishing party. One day I went alone to a mill-pond about a mile from home. Soon after I let down my hook, I found it was fast on some old wood that lay concealed in the water. Being afraid of breaking my line, and consequently losing my hook, which was a borrowed one, I thought of trying to wade in to get it off. In this attempt, to human appearance, I was the nearest to death, that I ever was in my life. What David said frequently to Jonathan—"there is but one step between me and death"—was more than literally true, when there was apparently not half a step with me.

Not knowing the depth of the water, I proceeded with some caution a few steps,

when I was suddenly alarmed at not finding my bottom—and had imprudently ventured so far in feeling for it, that I found it much easier to go forward than to get back. Thus fixed in a kind of poise, death appeared on one side and life on the other, and I hung for a few moments in doubtful suspense between them ! I could not swim, and feared that I should sink : the balance however soon turned in favour of life.

I was glad to get out again. But my hook was still fast. I then went up a small distance, to where some boys were at work in a clearing : told them how I was situated, with the attempt I had made. They were alarmed on hearing the danger I had just escaped, and came down with me ; and being better acquainted with the fishing business than I was, got my hook off safely.

They told me that the water there was ten feet deep ; that the bank at which I had stopped was perpendicular, being the bank of the creek's former channel. After thanking them for their kind assistance, I was content to go home without any further attempt at

fishing. And although I considered myself very fortunate in having made such a narrow escape, yet the impression on my mind was very superficial. I thought more about it seven or eight years after, than I did at the time—in these days of vanity and dissipation, serious thoughts were almost banished from my mind.

CHAPTER III.

After coming to Carolina, I found myself for some time rather lonesome, being cut off from intercourse with my former companions : I had however much time for thought and reflection. There was then no stated preaching in this country ; but only occasional supplies from the northward, which were most frequent in the winter season. Our long summer Sabbath's were mostly silent. These however afforded a great deal of time for reading as well as rest. Being fond of reading and rest too, the Sabbath was to me generally a welcome day. And I sometimes thought that the sun shone with more beauty and benignity on that day than on any other : that it seemed to give a more pleasing aspect to the whole face of nature.

About this time I was much delighted in reading the dying sayings of good men, in "Willison's Afflicted Man's Companion."

I thought sometimes, that if I could die like some of them, I did not much care how soon, and sometimes meditated on the joys of heaven till my eyes would overflow with tears; not of sorrow or remorse, but of joy, of gratitude, of desire, and, as I thought, of love. About the year 1772, the Rev. Mr. Harris took the charge of Thyatira congregation, for one or two years. In the after part of the summer of 1773, the administration of the Sacrament of the Supper was proposed—preparatory to which, several days were appointed for catechising young people who had in prospect to come forward for the first time. I attended with the rest, and being found to have a competency of knowledge, and nothing against my moral character, the way was open for my admission. Self-examination was, however, to be attended to. This I found to be a pretty difficult business, for which I had neither much inclination nor capacity—but was determined that in the result, it ought to come out in my favour. And so it did. But it cost me some trouble, both with respect to my general character as a

Christian, and more especially as to the exercises of some particular graces. Faith and repentance I had understood to be essential to the Christian character. Faith I thought to be quite an easy thing, and that I could believe as well as any body. I was not so certain about repentance—but a little doubtful whether ever I had repented in my life. I know I had sometimes been sorry for sin; but whether my sorrow was of that kind and degree that was necessary to constitute true repentance, I could not so well determine.

However I thought it was best to make sure work of it, and begin then, if I had never done it before. Not knowing or considering that Jesus Christ was exalted to give repentance, &c. I set myself to perform that good work in my own strength.

To effect this, I tried to call up all my sins, and set them in order before me. - But I had been such an *innocent creature*, I could not find materials to lay a foundation on which I could build repentance. I believe I rather repented that I had not been a greater

sinner ; and almost envied the situation of a condemned malefactor for murder or some atrocious crime ; and even once thought of committing some gross sin that would cause remorse, and lay a foundation for repentance ! From whatever source this thought proceeded, whether from a heart blinded by ignorance and vice, or by the ruler of the darkness of this world, it was too gross to admit of a moment's serious investigation.

I saw then no other way than, like Saul with the burnt offering, "to force myself"—but in this attempt also I failed. It gave me some uneasiness, that there was a grace that I knew to be absolutely necessary to salvation, and yet I could not exercise it. I read much on the subject to little advantage, and at last laid it aside, as an uncertainty which I would perhaps know more about afterwards. I was told that two things were necessary to fit us for the Communion, viz : "a gracious state, and a gracious frame"—that it was not enough to have grace in the cold habit ; but that it must be brought into lively exercise.

With regard to the first, I carefully examin-

ed "Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest"—and found different exercises applied to different descriptions of characters. That to those who had the advantages of a religious education; early instruction, and were moral in their lives; the change was generally more gradual, and less perceptible than in the more ignorant or profligate characters; and that such were more apt afterwards to call their religion in question. This characteristic description seemed to fit me very well, except in one particular.

I was not conscious of having experienced a thorough change in any period of my life. But in this my author helped me out by saying, that in some, the change was so early, that they might be said with Jeremiah or John the Baptist, to be sanctified from the birth. I concluded therefore that this must be the case with me.

I mention this, not to reproach the author, but to show how the best things may be abused by men of corrupt minds; as I made no better use of some parts even of the sacred Scrip-

tures, particularly Romans x. 9, and 13, I thought I could confess with my mouth, and believe in my heart. I had no doubt of it. And as to calling on the name of the Lord, it was my daily practice—and so I claimed the promise.

But another and greater difficulty still remained.

Although I could persuade myself that I had grace in the cold habit, yet certain I was, that I had it not in lively exercise. This, however, I hoped to obtain in due time.

In this state, what is called the preparation week, found me. Hoping still that if not before, at the last extremity my necessity would so powerfully plead for me, that I should then obtain the so much wished for promise, the week went round till Saturday, without any apparent change in my mind for the better. I thought rather that I got more hard and stupid, and was not without some fearful apprehensions that all was not well at the bottom.

In the evening Mr. Harris called the young

people together to receive their tokens. I took one with little expectation of using it. Mr. Harris, as he handed the tokens round, spoke a few words that affected me more than all the sermons I had heard for half a year. The words were these : "I give you these tokens, not knowing your hearts. May the Lord give you a token for good at his table to-morrow." My heart said Amen, to the last clause.

As to the first, I thought if he had known my heart, I should have had no token from him at that time.

In the evening I retired alone, resolving to spend the whole night in prayer. I was now come to what I supposed the last extremity ; when it might be expected that every power of body and mind would be exerted to do the utmost that could be effected by human effort. How great was my disappointment ! I here learned a lesson I had never been taught before. I always thought that I could do something for myself if brought to the pinch of dire necessity. And now I learned

the amount of what I could do—the sum total was NOTHING. It seemed to me that I could scarcely speak three words of common sense, or fix my attention to what I was saying for one moment. When I found that I could do nothing, I changed my resolution of sitting up all night, and about midnight went to rest. Next morning I was up early, and in retirement found a little liberty and enlargement: from which I took some encouragement; I thought it was a good omen. If I am not mistaken, some change at this time took place in my views and exercises from what I had learned the evening before. Till then, I had always entertained the thought that I could do something towards my own salvation. I knew that I had never yet exerted myself to the utmost; but if necessity required it, every power I possessed would be roused to activity and exertion. O, how I would pray! how “I would order my cause before him and fill my mouth with arguments!”

Or if I should fail here, my distress would plead for me in language louder than words.

But I had learned that this was all mere illusion, and that I could do nothing that would, in the smallest degree, entitle me to the favour or friendship of an offended Judge. I gave up therefore my legal hopes, and new frames and feelings were all in all. This change amounted then to no more than from one species of hypocrisy to another. If I could only get my heart affected with divine things, my object was gained. I rested there satisfied. This I found I could best manage alone; and though I might have had good company, I chose to ride that morning all the way to the meeting alone. I was in hopes of being well prepared when I got there, by taking with me a good frame. I called up every consideration I could think of to excite tender emotions in my mind, and gained my object. I believe I wept almost the whole way.

When I got there and began to mix among the crowd, a variety of objects took my attention, and presently I found my frame was gone. This distressed me so much that I could pay but little attention to the forenoon

sermon. The time was coming round apace, when I must take a decided part, either stay back or go forward. I know of no words that can fully express the distress and anxiety of my mind. I knew not what to do. At last I thought of an encouragement that had been given by Mr. Robert Smith, of Pequea, on a similar occasion. Seeing people tardy in coming forward, he addressed them in these words: "What are you waiting for? you are waiting for a frame—come to Christ for one." This seemed precisely to suit my case; not knowing or considering that to come to Christ and to come to his table in an unprepared state, were two very different things.

However, when the conflict within had lasted as long as time would admit, I went forward trembling. On sitting down, I met with something to which I can give no name, except I should call it a glow of animal nature. It appeared like a pleasant perfume diffusing itself through my whole body. For a moment I lost sight of every object around me: I seemed as if I were on Mount Tabor, or in "a field that the Lord hath blest." In

short, I thought it was Christ's table of a truth, and he was come to welcome me there. While I was in this pleasing dream, one of the elders came along lifting the tokens. I had been so careful of mine as to put it into a little pocket book that had a division in it: and that I might have no difficulty in finding it, had taken the precaution to mark in my memory the place I had put it. On feeling for my token I could not find it; and being very certain that I could not have lost it, I knew of no way it could have gotten out, except it had been removed by an invisible hand; and if so, it was proof presumptive that I was not worthy of it. I found it at last in the other side; the bottom of the division leaf was open, which I had not perceived, and the token had slipped through.

So small a matter as this, was quite sufficient to disconcert and throw my mind into confusion; so that all my skill was not sufficient to reduce it again to order, through the exercises of the whole day.

After returning home, I took a longer evening walk than usual, reflecting on my situa-

tion, and at last came to this conclusion, that all was wrong with me; that I was nothing more than a splendid hypocrite, blinded by self-flattery. And to this was attached the cutting thought and reflection, that to all my other sins, I had added that day, the sin of communicating unworthily. I felt shame and remorse to a degree I had never before experienced. I sometimes thought my head and heart should have broken while I tried to suppress my inward anguish, till at length I was made bitterly to cry out. I returned home late at night, more calm, being rather exhausted than relieved.

Thus I continued in a sad and disconsolate state for two weeks.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the second Sabbath after the Communion, M.. Harris had an appointment in a neighbouring congregation. In the morning, I was more than ordinarily disturbed in mind : I could get no rest. After breakfast I took Willison's Sacramental Catechism in my hand and went out. I knew that there were many cases of conscience in it, and did not know but I might meet with something applicable to my case. I sat down to read ; but found I could not keep my eye upon the book : and far less fix my attention to any thing in it. I closed the book and laid it down beside me ; while in a kind of melancholy musing, these words frequently arrested my attention : "What will you do in the day of your visitation ? To whom will you flee for help ? Where will you leave your glory ?" Ah ! to flee ! I could not tell where to flee ! I once thought of going to a pious neighbour for advice, but I

thought again, "vain is the help of man"—
"they would be all physicians of no value."
I might go to men, I might go to books; they
would all give me the same, or a similar an-
swer to that of Joseph to Pharaoh, "It is not
in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of
peace." I must go to God, with whom alone
I have to do.

Here my situation became more serious.
My former refuges all failed me, and proved
to be no better than refuges of lies. I saw
that my best duties were of no more account
to secure the favour and friendship of God, than
my sins; and that the united efforts of all the
men upon earth, and angels in heaven, could
do me but little service.

Thus despairing of relief from any other
quarter, I had no alternative, but must go to
that God whose law condemned me; and
whose justice demanded nothing less than my
eternal punishment. My imagination pre-
sented to my mind the following picture:
That I was as if under a great mountain
which hung over me. I saw the justice of
God like huge massy rocks hanging loose

over my head, suspended upon nothing that I could see, sufficient to prevent their fall—when at the same time I knew that I deserved to be crushed to pieces; and that one small stone would be fully sufficient for that purpose; whilst I was unable to move one step for my own safety. I recollect once with an audible vehemence to have expressed, from the very bottom of my heart, these words: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” I wondered that I was alive; and believe that this thought alone, *that I was alive*, for some time supported me. I reasoned like Manoah’s wife, “that if God were pleased to kill me, he would not have borne with me so long; nor would he have suffered me to profane his holy ordinance; the recollection of which lay heavy on my mind.” He might yet have thought of mercy towards me, but how it could be exercised consistent with his justice, I was totally at a loss to comprehend. I thought if I were sent to hell, I could justify God in my condemnation, and for ever say, “righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto me shame and confusion of face.” And fur-

ther I thought that if it was possible for a sinner in hell to love God, I would love him.

The awful views I at first had of wrath and danger, gradually gave way to views of something amiable in the divine character; and a kind of trust, though I know of no foundation on which it rested, except it was on the mere mercy of God. I frequently thought of the resolution of Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and tried to make it my own. I do not know that I was ever willing to go to hell. If I was, it was with the mistaken view that I could love, honour and promote the glory of God there. But this I remember well, that my sinfulness and insignificance made the mere matter of suffering appear to be comparatively a little thing, if the glory of God could, by it, be any way promoted. I knew that God could glorify his justice in my eternal condemnation; but O, I thought, if there were any way that I could be saved, his mercy would shine gloriously in my salvation.

There is one thing that I have since wondered at, perhaps a thousand times, that in all

this time, which I suppose was about three hours, I do not recollect to have had one thought about Jesus Christ as a mediator between God and man, but seemed still to have to deal with God as an absolute God ; though I had been doctrinally taught, and knew well the theory of the way of salvation ; but the practical view of it so as to apply it to my own case, never entered my mind, till I was driven on almost to despair.

While under great depression of spirits, looking every way for relief, or like a drowning man, catching at every stick or straw, these words came into, or rather seemed to dart across my mind, " Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day and for ever," and gave a new spring to every power of my exhausted mind. I presently recollected what I believe I had somewhere read before, that Jesus Christ, while on earth, never put any away that came to him begging for mercy ; and that in his glorified state, he retained the same bowels of compassion and tender mercy. I thought of the lepers at the gate of Samaria, who said " Why sit we here until we die ?"

“Let us face unto the host of the Syrians, and if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us we shall but die.” I thought of Esther’s resolution to go in unto the king, though contrary to the law and at the hazard of her life; and how well both succeeded.

I formed the resolution of casting my guilty soul at the feet of Christ, and if I perished, I would perish at his feet. This resolution was no sooner formed, than I endeavoured to put it in practice. I saw a suitableness in the Saviour to me before unknown, to answer all my soul’s necessities. I saw in him every thing I wanted; and in him I found rest for my weary soul with peace and joy in believing.

And though it is now more than forty years, I think I could go to the tree, if yet standing, (then only a sapling) at which I stood, and like a penitent, confessed my sins, and saw the “fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” freely flowing to remove my guilt and wash away my pollution.

It was now about noon; my darkness was turned to day. Never was there more differ-

ence between midnight darkness and noon-day, than was between that morning and afternoon. I thought I knew before what believing was; but now I knew in "whom I believed, and was persuaded that he was able to keep that which I had committed to him against that day." Although my joy was far from that height of rapture and ecstasy, that I have in many instances since witnessed; yet it was more permanent, and continued uninterrupted for weeks, perhaps I might say for months; that it would have been as difficult for me to have doubted, as it was before to believe. It seemed as if I had gotten into a new world, and had new views and apprehensions of myself, and almost every thing around me—of God, of the world, of sin, of holiness, of time, of eternity, of the savour of sinners, and of the institutions of his grace. My feelings took my attention less than the objects that occasioned them.

It was not then, as it has been since, customary for young people to converse familiarly on their religious experience: I therefore kept all my feelings to myself, except what

might be visible in my countenance, in which, before, might have been read the marks of dejection or despair, but was now, with Hannah's, "no more sad." I then felt the force and propriety of one of Solomon's proverbs, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joys."

CHAPTER V.

It was not long, however, till the arch adversary made for once an unsuccessful attack upon my peace ; the suggestion was plausible, “ Now you are a believer, and once in Christ, still in Christ. You are now out of danger, there is now no occasion for so much painfulness in duties. Less praying and time spent in meditation, will now answer your purpose. Besides, you are now in the vigor of youth, and prime of life, you may lawfully indulge in the innocent pleasures of your age. Religion was never intended to lessen, but rather to increase the pleasures of mankind. Your seriousness would much better befit the age of sixty, except you mean to devote yourself to the life of a hermit, or to spend the remainder of your days in a cloister.”

How much truth soever there might have been in these suggestions, yet from this single specimen, I have drawn a proof sufficient to

satisfy me, that Satan does not always know the inward exercises of our minds, or he would time his temptations in some instances better. When these suggestions were presented to my mind, I had learned to know something about being dead to the world, by the cross of Christ, and sensual baits had no more influence upon me than the passing wind. And as to restraining prayer, and taking less time for meditation, it might just as well have been suggested to me when hungry, that I need not be at the trouble of eating; or when thirsty, that it was too much trouble to take the cooling draught. For in short, my meat and my drink seemed to be, to do the will of my heavenly Father.

But alas! my corruptions, that I thought were all dead, revived again; and I found evil enough within me, without any other tempter, to prompt me on to the commission of sin and neglect of duty. I soon found that when left to myself, I was a poor, weak, wicked, and helpless creature; but it was long before I could learn to trust in that grace which was alone sufficient for me, and that

strength by which alone I was able to stand. My unbelief and misgiving fears prevailed against my weak faith, and not unfrequently the foundation of my hope was called in question. And I believe I should sometimes have fainted, had it not been for the goodness of the Lord in giving me some reviving cordials, that cheered my drooping spirits.

When we had no sermon, I usually spent my Sabbaths alone in some retired place. This I found to be attended with its advantages, according to the state of my mind. When my mind had gotten a right bent or direction, its exercises were more free and uninterrupted; but this was not always the case.

However easily I could get rid of company, I could not always get rid of myself: vain thoughts still lodged within me, and would be breaking out on every occasion. I seemed like the young Median that thought he had two souls, one disposed to good, the other inclined to evil, and each seemed to aim at nothing less than the destruction of the other. The contest between these two contending powers, made my heart literally the seat of

war, and Israel and Amalek prevailed by turns ; so that some Sabbaths were far from being days of rest, and might more properly be called days of conflict.

One morning, on going out, I was grieved to think how I had spent some preceding Sabbaths ; and knowing that I carried with me the same deceitful treacherous heart, I could have no security that that day would be spent any better. O, how happy I thought I should be to spend but one day in communion and fellowship with God, without interruption from vain, wandering and wicked thoughts ; and I knew of nothing to hinder but the wickedness of my own heart, that was ever like the sons of Zemiah with David, “ too hard for me.”

Whilst musing as I walked along, on the ungovernable madness of my heart, these words came with impressive force into my mind : “ Son, give me thine heart.” My heart promptly replied with the aid of my voice, “ Lord, take my heart to thee ; let it be thine this day, and thine for ever—the day is thine, may the work be thine—Let no vain

thought intrude upon these sacred hours." I presently felt a calm and composure of mind to me unknown for some time before.

I had Flavel's sixth volume, which treats on Husbandry and Navigation Spiritualized; and after committing myself to God for the day, I sat down to read. The place I opened upon, was on the union of the graft with the stock: I read with pleasure, and I think with profit. No vain thoughts troubled me.

A short poem on this subject I read several times over; and it seemed to me that I could have read it a hundred times, and still have seen in it something new. I soon committed it to memory, after which my book was of little further service to me. The verse that most attracted my attention, was this

"As long as e'er the root doth live,
The branches are not dry;
While Christ hath grace and life to give,
My soul can never die."

My thoughts and affections rose like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, till I lost sight of this earth; and for some time I thought no

more about it, or any thing it contained, than if I had not been an inhabitant. I recollect once of giving a transient glance to this world, which appeared like a dusky shade, or no better than dust and ashes, when compared with the upper world.

Happening to fix my eyes upon the body of the sun, I was surprised at the speed it had made. It was near two o'clock, our usual time for dinner, when I would not have thought that I had been there more than half an hour. A small conflict arose in my mind about going home ; I was loath to leave my sweet retreat, and felt no disposition for eating ; but fearing that my absence would occasion some anxiety in the family, I thought that perhaps it was my duty upon their account, to go ; though, for myself, I had much rather staid where I was. I set off for home ; but hesitated and halted several times. The words of the Psalmist (Ps. 94,) I thought I could use with self-application, "in the multitude of my thoughts within me, his comforts delight my soul." O how glad I would have been to have had some secret place where I

would have met with no interruption all the day. But the thoughts of giving uneasiness to the family finally prevailed, and I went home; but it was no home to me, I recollect nothing of what passed there; and it seemed as if my heart did not go with me.

I soon returned, but with this disadvantage; that it did not appear to me to be the same place. It was neither a Bethel nor a Peniel. Nothing but common woods. I tried to realize the beauties I had seen in my poem; but they were all gone. I could see no more in it than in the rest of the book, and it all appeared to be little more than a blank. Thus situated, the afternoon appeared as much longer than usual, as the forenoon was shorter; the greater part of which, I believe, I was on my knees.

It was in the season of feeding cattle: and though I did not then attend to that business on week days, I usually assisted on the Sabbath. Observing that the sun was sinking down, and that it would soon be time for that business to commence, I knew not how I could leave the place without some token of the Divine presence with me.

I resolved to try what supplicating the throne of grace once more would do. The result was, I thought no more of feeding cattle till it was dark.

This I consider as one of my high days. And such indeed it might have been to me, if I had known how to improve it. I know that these were signal manifestations and communications of Divine grace; and I know also that "where much is given, much will be required," and that I have been far from rendering according to the benefit received. When I reflect upon my poor unprofitable life, shame and confusion of face may cover me. It is said of Solomon, that "the Lord was angry with him because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice."

I am well aware that these and such like exercises will, by the gay world, be accounted enthusiastic and delusive. To this I at present feel no disposition to make any other reply, than that "I could wish to be always thus enthusiastic," while at the same time I am prepared not to wonder at the world's mis-

taken notion, when I recollect that he who was the subject of these exercises, and who, more than all others, might be supposed to have a fair opportunity of knowing their truth and reality, once formed an opinion of them not much more to their advantage; and even more than once doubted the genuineness of their source. If it should be asked how this was brought about, I answer, by what is but too common to all, more especially to young Christians; I mean paying too great a compliment to religious feelings. "Forsaking the fountain of living waters," and following the dying stream till it dries up: like the sportive fish that can glide and play down the current while it has a sufficient depth of water; but when that fails, is found gasping and dying, and can never return without a fresh supply.

However useful and ornamental such exercises may be in the superstructure, they are by no means fit materials for the foundation; "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

“ We have a more sure word of prophesy unto which we do well to take heed.”

“ Faith has for its foundation broad,
A stable rock on which I stand ;
The truth and faithfulness of God—
All other grounds are sinking sand.

“ The oath and promise of the Lord,
Join to confirm the wondrous grace,
Eternal power performs the word,
And fills all heav’n with endless praise.”

Upon the whole, when I take a retrospective view of my past life, I can say nothing less than this, “ goodness and mercy have followed me.”

I know I have not been exempt from trials : and I know also that God is faithful, who has not suffered me to be tried above what he gave me strength to bear, and has also with the trial made a way of escape.

One thing on this subject may appear a paradox to many ; that is, that the days of my greatest trials I reckon among the most comfortable days that I have spent upon earth. So that upon the whole, I can say, that “ I have never been a great sufferer, though al-

ways a great sinner." I speak not now of gross out-breakings; but an inward alienation of heart from God. My backslidings have been many. I have much to lament; but desire to be an eternal debtor to that grace that has so often restored my wandering soul. Thus, "having obtained help of God, I continue to this day," hoping and trusting that the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin, will still continue to cleanse, and at last present me without spot, before his Father's throne, where I shall see his face and sing his praise, world without end. Amen.

Having finished what I intended by way of Narrative, I shall now, in the form of Appendix, make some observations in subservience to my main design; which was, to give my feeble testimony to the truth of the doctrine of salvation by grace, and operations of the Holy Spirit in the conviction and renovation of the human heart. If a general view of what I have written, gives no evidence of the truth of these doctrines, I should almost despair of success in making any comment upon it. I shall however notice a few particulars, which, not admitting a divine agency in changing the heart, and the invincibleness of divine grace, are to me altogether inexplicable.

If it should be asked, why I have selected the doctrines of salvation by grace, and operations of the Holy Spirit, out of several others, so nearly related to them, such as, "our lost state by nature; the imputation of Christ's righteousness," &c.—they being all doctrines of the reformation; I answer, be-

cause I believe them to be all doctrines of the Scriptures as well as of the reformation, and so nearly related, that they cannot be easily separated. But in placing these two doctrines together, I would not wish to be understood to think them of equal importance; or rather that the rejection or denial of them would be attended with equal danger. Although they are nearly connected, and seem both to lie at the very foundation of my hope, yet I can more easily conceive of the possibility of salvation, in the denial of the fulness and sovereignty of grace, (though I confess I do not understand it) than in the denial of the operations of the Spirit; which is a prominent characteristic trait of an infidel.

As to the former, a quotation from Dr. Witherspoon, in his *Essay on Justification*, (vol. I p. 80,) will express my thoughts fully, and with which, I will dismiss the subject.—“If the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification, I do not see how we can avoid concluding the danger of those who are upon any other plan. And yet I am persuaded there have been, and are

many good men among them : which may be accounted for in this manner, that their hearts are better than their understandings ; and they are habitually under the government of principles which, through some mistaken views and groundless fears of their abuse they speak of more sparingly, or rather seem to establish the contrary positions. The proof of this I take from their writings, particularly from the difference between their sermons and other discourses, and their forms of prayer which they have drawn up, and not only recommended to others, but left behind them as a witness of their own exercise in their closets. If they be supposed to feel the sentiments which they express in their prayers, it can easily be made appear that these sentiments can only be dictated by the doctrine of free grace. If what they say of themselves be true in its natural and obvious meaning, and if they believe it, which charity obliges us to suppose, it must be altogether in vain to lay the least stress upon their own righteousness for their acceptance with God."

I shall now conclude with a few remarks on reading the Scriptures in family worship.

Soon after I was entrusted with the charge of a family, it was recommended to me, by one whose judgment I had reason to respect, as the most expedient method of reading the Scriptures in family worship, to read them in order: that is to say, a portion out of the New Testament in the morning, and out of the Old at night.

This arrangement was thought best on account that the Old Testament contained a greater number and variety of historical facts, which would be most likely to engage the attention of children, and prevent drowsiness, which might otherwise be too ready to steal in after the active duties and fatigues of the day. The only objection I had against this proposal was, that the Old Testament would take the same proportion of time and attention with the New, when I thought the latter ought, on some accounts, to have greatly the preference. This objection, however, was in a great measure removed, when I found, by actual experiment, that when not much in-

interrupted by sickness, absence, or otherwise, and by sometimes reading two chapters together, when connected, and not too long, I could read the whole of the New Testament in less than eight months; when the Old Testament, under like circumstances, required little less than two years. The proportion of time then was about three to one; that is, observing this order, I could read the New Testament three times for once that I could read the Old.

I cannot help being surprised and ashamed too, to think how often I must have read the Scriptures, and how very small my knowledge of them continues to be. I suppose, upon a very moderate calculation, which I must certainly have exceeded, I have read the New Testament once every year, and the Old Testament once every three years, for thirty-nine years past, which is as much as to say, that I have read the New Testament thirty-nine times, and the Old Testament thirteen times over.

By an attentive reader, it might be expect-

ed by this time, that the New Testament at least would have been all committed to memory. This is so far from being the case, that I believe I scarcely ever read either of them over without finding something that I never knew or noticed before. And I am rather inclined to think that this would be the case, were I to live and read on to the age of Methuseleh. There is no book which will stand reading, without weariness, like the Bible. I suppose I should long since have been tired of reading so much in any other book. But instead of this, I find my taste and relish for the Scriptures greatly increased, since I first began to read them. So that I can join my hearty assent to the following verse, with which I will come to a close :

“Thy Word is everlasting truth,
How pure is every page !
That holy book shall guide our youth,
And will support our age.”

This brief memoir is now made public, in the belief that it will be read with interest, and attended with the blessing of God.

MR. BARR'S NOTE.

At the close of the preceding "Narrative," is found the following note :

"After writing the above, I was favoured with a manuscript containing the religious experience of John McCorkle. And having obtained leave to transcribe it, I purpose to copy it off on a separate paper, and earnestly recommend the perusal of it to all who may think what I have written worthy of their consideration."



THE
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
OF
JOHN McCORKLE,
IN A
SERIES OF SHORT LETTERS TO A FRIEND.
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

JOHN McCORKLE, Esq. brother to Rev. Samuel E. McCorkle, D. D., for many years a distinguished minister of the Presbyterian Church, in North Carolina, lived in the same neighbourhood with Mr. Barr, and married his sister.

Though he has now been dead for more than thirty years, his memory, as a magistrate, a neighbour, an intelligent counsellor, and devoted Christian, is still precious to those who knew him.

The following letters, containing his religious experience, were addressed to Miss Martha Andrews, (now Mrs. King, of Iredell county, North Carolina,) who told me a few weeks since, that she still possessed the original manuscripts. The last was written but a few months before Mr. McCorkle's death. He died August 26, 1800, aged fifty years. S.

Doylestown, Pa., Jan. 18, 1833.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, &c.

No. 1.

December 5th, 1799.

IN compliance with your request, and my promise, I propose to tell you, that as early in life as I can well remember, I was convinced that I was a sinner, and dying so, I must be damned ; and this belief grew up with me. I believed I had no religion ; my convictions at the age of perhaps fifteen, or thereabouts, were sometimes strong by turns. A prospect of death, an alarming book or sermon, generally gave an additional spring to duty ; such as reading and prayer. Sometimes I would go mourning for days, weeks, and months together. My convictions or uneasiness arose, not from a charge of any particular sin or sins, but from a want of religion ; and though I had warm exercises, and often in prayer such views or clear sense of the value of God's

favour, and divine things communicable through a Redeemer, that I wished all the world might see and feel as I then did, and would at the time be almost persuaded to believe I had religion ; yet I had, like Thomas, formed a resolution, that without a manifestation beyond all contradiction, I would not believe, for fear I should rest short of true religion.

No. 2.

December 12th, 1799.

I before told you I had formed a resolution that I would not believe I had religion, without a manifestation beyond dispute. And though I was more hopeful when quickened, (and Sacramental occasions had this effect,) yet they were awful occasions to me ; for I considered myself under a fatal necessity of sinning, either by coming unprepared, or slighting the ordinance by staying back.

I often secretly wished, on the approach of such occasions, that Providence would so

order it, that I might not be permitted to attend. Not that I wished to shun conviction, for I always sought more and deeper conviction ; but for the reason above, of being necessitated to sin, either by coming unprepared, or slighting the ordinance.

Thus I continued, sometimes more and sometimes less engaged about my salvation, but never wholly at ease ; and still seeking more conviction and stronger exercises of fear. And though at sometimes I had pleasing views of the grace of God to sinners, yet I never could or would permit myself to believe I had any interest in that salvation. These views too were short, nor had they any permanent influence.

No. 3.

December 19th, 1799.

I continued in the situation before mentioned, until about the age of twenty-two years, when I attended a Sacramental occasion, with

something more than usual anxiety of mind. I durst not come forward, and was afraid to stay away. On Sunday evening I was in a state of distress almost to an agony. I spent the evening wrestling with God in prayer, and the night in sighs and groans. I was up long before the family where I lodged arose. Spent the morning as the evening, in earnest wrestling with God, to show me his salvation upon any terms he pleased. I thought I was willing to do or suffer any thing for Jesus Christ. I was granted great liberty in pleading with God, whom I could never call *my God*.

When I expected the family would be called to breakfast, I attended, something more composed; though determined not to take comfort. However, I was calmed into a new and strange peace, or rather quiet; my mind seemed to be swallowed up in a love which I had never felt before. I do not know that my love centred immediately on God or Christ; but I loved all the human race, and indeed every thing that God had made. And though I did not believe my happiness secure, yet I

could not feel distress. Common conversation had no relish with me. I shunned society; and when obliged to mix with mankind I was not happy. In this strange and new state, I continued for some time; but it declined by degrees and left me as before.

No. 4.

January 4th, 1800.

I have told you in No. 3, that I had got back into my former state, after an experience of a strange kind of love and serenity of mind, out of conceit of the world, and pleased with the contemplation of spiritual things. In this state of fear, and seeking for fear, that I might be quickened in duty, I continued without any material alteration till about the age of twenty-six, when I was visited with sickness, and brought, as I thought, within a few moments of eternity. I then cried out, that I must be lost; time for change, or the offers of grace were then at an end, and I had no

hope. I tried to believe, but could not ; I tried to view Jesus as a Saviour, but could not : He appeared as one nigh me, but behind a veil or curtain. A godly neighbour* stood by my bed-side. She urged me to cast my soul on Jesus. I told her I could not see him so as to believe. She begged of me to *try* and trust. I despaired of my salvation for any thing I could do. I had tried and tried again, in all the earnestness and bitterness of my soul to believe ; but all in vain. When she told me to *try* and *trust*, I as it were, let go all hope in myself, and said, “ if I perish, I perish.” But, my young friend, the change, the transition that then took place, no images that I can use can sufficiently represent.

No. 5.

January 11th, 1800.

I have informed you that no images I could draw, can fully represent the view and change

* Mrs. Martha Andrews.

I experienced on giving up my own efforts to believe of myself. Jesus no more appeared behind a veil; but full to the eye of my mind: as full and certain as ever the sun in the heavens did to my natural eyes. I saw him an able, a suitable, and altogether willing Saviour. I saw the plan of salvation bringing such additional glory to God, and happiness to man, that I felt satisfied that man had fallen. I felt such a transcendent love to God, and his image and people, that the greatest degree of love I had ever felt for any person, heightened with natural or conjugal affection, was no more than a drop to the ocean. I thought I felt the image of God impressed on my soul; and the transport was so great that I forgot my pain of, and care for, the body. Nor did I wish to stay in the body; though I felt happy, yet I desired to be still more happy. I thought if I must be restored to health, I could scarcely ever sin any more; but could spend and be spent for, and in the service of the immaculate Jesus. I thought this was the constant view and temper of mind of God's children; and I had but little

charity, for I thought surely there were but few saints of my acquaintance.

When I was urged to take rest in sleep, and felt drowsy, I grieved at the loss of so much precious time. I wished never to cease from telling how glorious a person Jesus was, and how excellent was his Gospel. In a word, I was sure of salvation—loved God, Christ, and his people to an ecstasy—delighted in praise, and still had room for growing love and increasing praise to all eternity : and thought sin, both in its power and consequences was quite done away ; so foolish and inexperienced was I ; and had I then been taken to heaven, would have known but little of the wretched depravity of my nature.

No. 6.

January 18th, 1800.

My last number left me on the Mount : now I must come down. After I had viewed and gazed on my Saviour, I foolishly began to turn my fancy on myself. I know it now,

though I did not see it then, that spiritual pride began to work. I thought I had got a stock of my own; that I was, or would be an eminent Christian here, and a fit companion for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the other world; and even comely enough for Jesus. Not knowing or considering that if I had any comeliness at all, it was the gracious loan of Christ, and not my own.

This being the turn my mind now took, you can easily guess what the consequence was: even the withdrawing of the Spirit. I found it going, and mourned the loss; but perceived not the cause. However, the Spirit by degrees withdrew, and left me in a few weeks, or perhaps days, such as I was before, with this exception, that I retained a confident belief that I was interested in the covenant of grace, and would not let it go.

No. 7.

January 27th, 1800.

You have just heard that spiritual pride had spilt my joyful cup. The Spirit had

withdrawn, and though not totally at once, yet it continued to withdraw by degrees, until it was, I believe, as totally gone as ever it was to any. I know not that I had any symptoms of its influence, except an uneasiness at times respecting my lifeless state, if this might be called the Spirit's work. I had no taste for religious conversation; preaching was to me, "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;" the word of God a sealed letter; family devotion a mere formality; and secret prayer no better, and often shamefully neglected; and I was destitute even of fear to stimulate in, or to duty. In this lifeless state, I continued some years; and had I been in the former part of my life in the habit of open or public vices, I have no reason to doubt but I should at this period have fallen into the practice of them again. But at length I began at times to let go my hope or confidence, which I believe arose from a dependence on the exercises mentioned before.

I wished for fear to animate to duty. I often tried to despair of my religion; but in vain. However, after some time I became

jealous, and sometimes doubting; until on the close of a Sacramental occasion, I lost all my hopes, and felt the terrors of the Lord to as indescribable a degree as I had enjoyed the sweetness of his love before.

No. 8.

February 1st, 1800.

My awful backsliding is yet fresh in my mind. I told you that at a Sacramental occasion I lost my hopes that were excited by my former sweet experiences. On the Monday evening I left the house of prayer not much discomposed; but ere I reached my own house, I was in an agony of distress.

As I once had heaven and happiness full in view, now I had hell and misery as full and as certain. I believed all the exercises of my former life were only the common strivings of God's Spirit; and that I had rejected and abused them; and that nothing now awaited me, but "a certain fearful look-

ing for of fiery indignation" from the Lord. The punishment demerited by a broken law did not seem so intolerable as the guilt of slighting the offers of mercy, and trampling on the precious blood of Jesus. This was the torment of my soul; I wished I had never heard of the Gospel. I wished to be any thing but a Gospel despiser; I even wished to be a devil! Yea I had thoughts of, (or was at least tempted to,) plunge myself into hell, that I might not add another day of Gospel rejections to all that had gone before.

My young friend, no image that I can think of in nature, better represents the state I was then in, than the most sudden and awful storm of black and tossing clouds, with rain, hail, and irresistible wind; with fiery streams of lightning, and peals of thunder in the highest conceivable degree.

No. 9.

February 9th, 1800.

I have given you an account of the terrors of the Lord which continued with me in an

awful degree for some days and nights. I thought I was in a state of complete desperation ; but when I took a very narrow or scrutinizing view, I found a thread, an only thread of hope remaining. And I believe it was maintained or supported by this, that I was allowed a remarkable liberty in pouring out my soul in prayer, or rather crying to God for mercy.

To my own view of things, had it not pleased the Lord to give this, or had I been shut out at this time as at other times, both before and since, I must have been plunged into hell on earth, or a state of total desperation. But so it pleased the Lord to deal with me. At length I began to have some hope : I recollected that God's people had suffered the terrors of the Lord after backsliding, and I would yet trust in him, and hope towards his holy place.

Then I began to prescribe to God ; and though I had backslidden from him, and he had caused his terrors to pass over, or in me ; yet it was his way to his own children after

deep distress, to raise to eminent enjoyment. But the Lord was pleased herein to disappoint me; for as I had backslidden by degrees, so he recovered me, if I am recovered at all. For though I seldom have a certainty of the truth of my religion, nor ever since had such clear and pleasing views, as before felt, and yet, through his grace, I hope I am going on from one degree of strength to another.

No. 10.

February 15th, 1800.

I have finished my Narrative, and have just stated a few plain facts, without remarking on them. This I leave you to do: or to assist you in remarking on them in an evening's conversation, when occasion may serve. You will see that to remark as I might have done, would have exceeded my time and attention; therefore you will excuse your friend in omitting so tedious an undertaking.

In this place you will permit me to state to you, as far as I can remember, how it has been

with me, with respect to reading, hearing, praying, meditation, conversing, attending the Lord's Supper, temptation, and also when under affliction.

Reading.—Sometimes the word of God appears as a sealed book ; at other times scarcely any page or sentence but discovers the finger of God, and a spiritual fund.

Preaching, in the former part of my life, had almost always a tendency to quicken ; especially if the terrors of the Lord were held forth ; and I did not much care for the sermon that was not alarming ; but for some years past, the sermon that was descriptive of the love of God through Jesus Christ, has been the most acceptable.

Prayer.—In my first exercises I delighted to dwell on the awful part of God's character : now, on the amiable. Sometimes I attempt prayer in dulness, and end in life : sometimes engage with an expectation of liberty, and am shut out : sometimes admitted to plead for others, when I am shut up for myself. Often granted liberty in social prayer, when cold in secret : sometimes left

to my own natural powers of mind and expressions, and sometimes deprived even of this. Sometimes clear views of spiritual things, liberty of thought and expression, while all the affections appeared to be in exercise according to the subject. Sometimes clear and fruitful ideas with apt and expressive words, while animal nature seemed to be asleep; all sweet, calm, and perfect serenity. Sometimes one or more of the parts of a subject of prayer dwelt on with freedom and light, and sometimes all and every part alike—when the soul could go from subject to subject with equal freedom and delight.

If I am to judge of myself, I have been deficient in *Meditation*; though sometimes more, and sometimes less attentive.

Conversation.—I have often found liberty in it when practical. And frequently a good and quickening effect following, though sometimes shut out and barren.

In the *Lord's Supper*, I suppose I have little of the evidence of God's children; no extraordinary manifestations here. But I have

observed that I always came away more or less quickened, or more or less dead—never as I went forward.

Temptations.—I have met with few if any, but what are common; yet I have had some sudden and unaccountable evil impressions or suggestions; except we admit of fiery darts, as described by the Apostle.—(Eph. vi. 16.) And sometimes I have been unseasonably haunted, or followed by such thoughts as these: that there was no God, no Saviour, no operating spirit, and no immortality in the soul. Spiritual pride has been such a common and destructive enemy to me, that I have often thought it was my predominant sin; and I have often been afraid to desire enjoyment, for fear of an opportunity of the growth of that strange sin, that seems to grow best when other sins wither and decay.

Though in the providence of God to me, there has been little in my life that to the view of others was singular, yet I have seen to my own view many things, in which a particular providence was manifested. And I hope I have learned to believe, that God not

only can, but has chosen and conducted things respecting me better than any human wisdom could have done. And I think I can with honesty say, that at the age of almost fifty years, if God were to leave me to choose for myself, for the little remainder of my life, and I should know it, I would be very unhappy in the thought. If I know myself, my petition would be, Lord choose my changes. And I would take the liberty of telling my young friend, that resignation to the dispensations of God's providence, is one of the best and sweetest blessings we enjoy here. It is both food and medicine, that will agree with every appetite, and suit every disease.

Affliction.—Though I would fain hope the Lord hath quickened and comforted me sometimes in afflictions, yet I have been taught that they are only a means, and ineffectual of themselves.

I have now, my friend, finished what you requested and I promised. And though in a very imperfect manner, yet with what truth, plainness, and honesty I am capable of. I know you will wish and need some explana-

tions ; and I know I ought as far as I can, to give them. You have had more from me of the Lord's way of dealing with me, than any one living, except the wife of my bosom. I make no doubt it will amuse you ; but if it should in any degree profit you, either by informing, quickening, or comforting you, I have abundant reward for my little labour. And may the Lord enable you to give Him the praise.

I charge you again not to trust to any thing in my experience, without the word of God confirming the same.

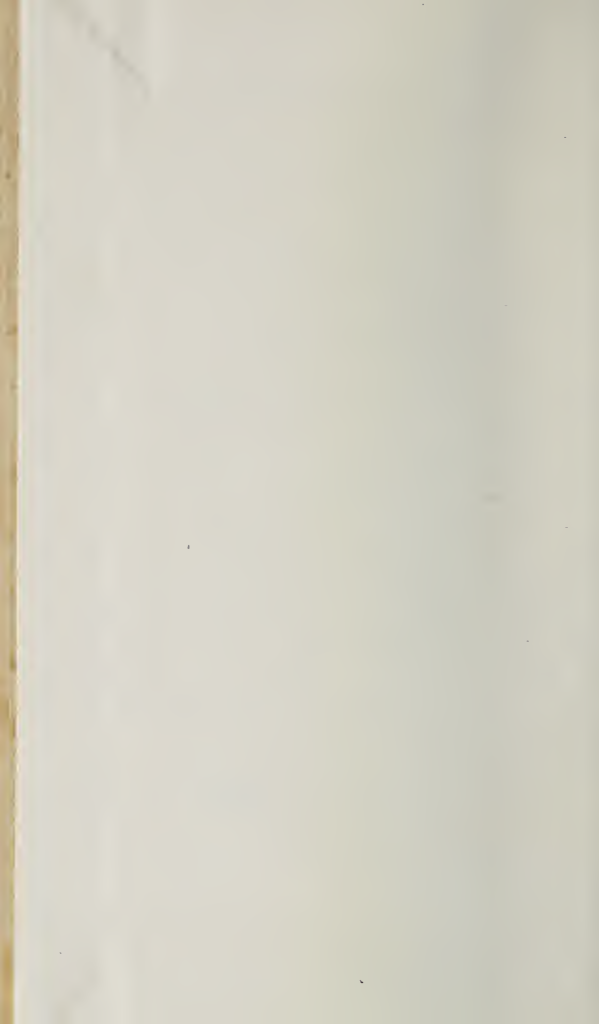
The Lord has not been pleased to give me assurance, neither do I ask it. I am afraid it would not be for my good, while I have such a wretched nature within me. You may think so too. If the Lord keeps me seeking here, and at last gives me a little happiness, and perfect holiness above, it is more than ought to be expected by your unworthy friend,

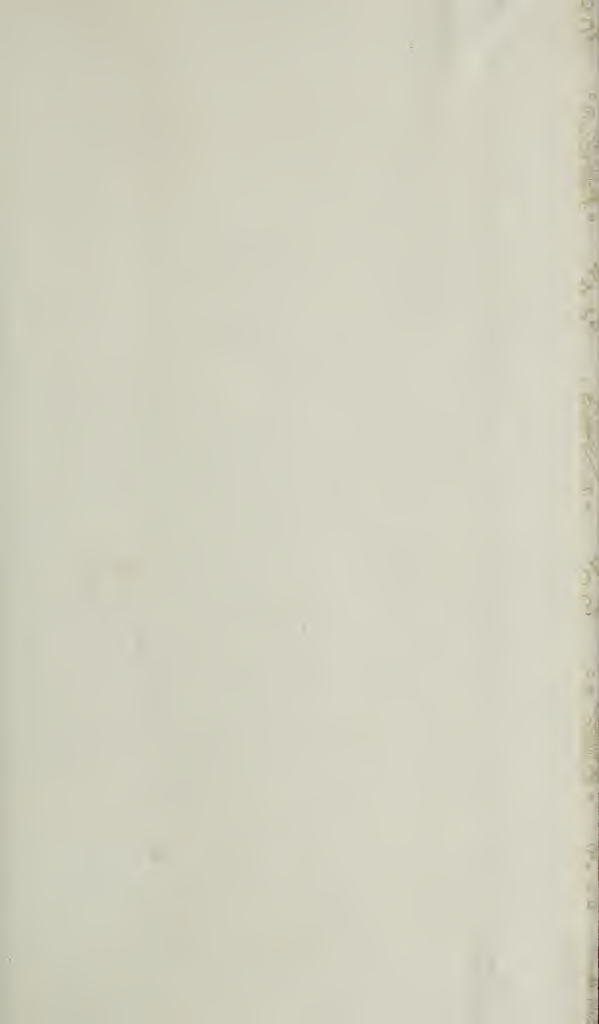
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